

Mission Design for Transformation

Presbytery of Long Island

[Adopted October 24, 2009]

The Presbytery of Long Island is a partnership of churches, working together so that all may hear, embrace, and enjoy new life in Jesus Christ.

(Presbytery of Long Island Vision Statement, last revised October 24, 2009)

³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” *Matthew 15:36-39*

Guiding Principles

I

The Holy Spirit calls us to transformation as individuals, as congregations, and as a Presbytery.

II

The Church of Jesus Christ is always being transformed by God to be more faithful in a particular time and place.

III

God commissions the church for mission into the world primarily through congregations. Congregational networks and partnerships can be effective and faithful agencies for transformation and mission. Mission conducted in a Presbytery area is best done in partnership with and among congregations.

IV

The Church is called to be Christ’s faithful evangelist. (Book of Order G-3.0000)

V

The Presbytery is more than a structure, an organization, a governing body, a staff, or an office. The Presbytery is connected congregations, pastors, elected officers, appointed workers, and specialized ministries serving together “to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility.” (Book of Order G-11.0103b)

VI

The priorities for Presbytery are discerned in conversations about strengths, dreams, and needs of congregations voiced in gatherings.

VII

God calls the Presbytery leadership to be both committed to and reflective of its diversity. All people must be encouraged to fully share in roles of leadership.

VIII

Presbytery governance shall embrace and encourage innovation and energy, while facilitating ministry initiatives, working cooperatively with other governing bodies, upholding standards of accountability, and maintaining fidelity to the Book of Order.

An Overview of the Structure

The Presbytery of Long Island is a partnership of churches serving Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York. In order to become more flexible and adaptable, the Presbytery's shared ministry is based on six components, informed by a continuing discernment process. Intended to promote interactive relationships between its components, the structure is decidedly non-hierarchical – indeed, wherever possible, the mission design encourages participation from every facet of Presbytery life and culture.

The six components of the new structure are:

- ***Partnering Congregations Team***
- ***Empowering Mission Team***
- ***Support and Facilitation Network***
- ***Shepherding Council***
- ***Presbytery Meetings***
- ***Visioning Retreat***

Support and Facilitation Network - is an almost invisible but powerful web, undergirding the life and ministry of the Presbytery and connecting the vision and priorities of Long Island Presbytery with important resources. This web consists of the Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, the Committee on Nominations, the Committee on Representation, the Committee on the Self-Development of People, the Board of Trustees, the Permanent Judicial Commission, the Sexual Misconduct Units (Response Team and Investigating Pool), and the Committee for Records, Rules, and Review.

Shepherding Council – serves as a bridge between the learnings, visions, and priorities of the *Visioning Retreat* and the use of energy in Presbytery activities. This group will be the “keeper of the vision – articulating the priorities discerned through the Visioning Retreat process and facilitating, instigating, matchmaking, and providing resources so that all parts of the Presbytery work together to achieve those priorities. This group will coordinate the stated *Presbytery Meetings*, through its Advance Planning Team, encourage and provide for leadership development, oversee personnel and staff, and direct and coordinate the annual budget process. Planning by the *Shepherding Council* will follow a biennial cycle with input from the *Visioning Retreat*.

Presbytery Meetings – are designed and structured in order to provide a balance among inspiration, information, business, and fellowship. Ordinarily, there will be four meetings per year plus the *Visioning Retreat* or other Presbytery-wide event, but the number and dates of the meetings for any given year are adopted by vote annually.

Visioning Retreat – is designed to explore the many ways in which we are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, and to discern God's call, which will shape the focus of our ministry, our vision, and our goals for the coming years. This retreat is open to church leaders, employees, members, and invited guests as we intentionally survey the ministry fields around us. We seek to listen to the voices of those long silenced. (Book of Confessions 10.4) Assessment of progress and reevaluation of vision are conducted by the *Shepherding Council* in an environment of spiritual growth. The

Shepherding Council will publish an account of progress toward the vision in preparation for the *Visioning Retreat*, will publish a summary of discoveries, and will monitor progress toward the revealed vision. Planning by the *Shepherding Council* will follow a biennial cycle with input from the *Visioning Retreat*, which will be held at least every other year to set the priorities for the next two-year cycle.

Ministry Teams:

Partnering Congregations and Empowering Mission

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:11-15

Every congregation travels on a spiritual journey unfolded by God in ways that are both alike and apart from every other journey, of every other congregation. But each journey, whether solo or in concert, must find its own voice, its own rhythm, its own harmony—its own direction. Our task as a presbytery is to make this possible.

We no longer assume that one road map suffices for all. Two teams, the *Partnering Congregations Team* and the *Empowering Mission Team*, provide flexible and responsive assistance to both individual congregations and groups of congregations. Such responsive assistance might emerge from workgroups, partnerships, or staff, or perhaps from a new entity springing forth out of a new opportunity for ministry.

The primary responsibility of both the *Partnering Congregations Team* and the *Empowering Mission Team* is to work with particular congregations, or groups of congregations, helping them to **strengthen their life and ministry as communities of faith and to reach out so that others may “hear, embrace, and enjoy new life in Christ”**. The *Partnering Congregations Team* responds to congregations and groups of congregations who want to enrich and deepen their life together in such areas as discipleship, spiritual growth, evangelism, stewardship, education and outreach. Hispanic ministries, congregational transformation, new church development, and the ministry of the Camp and Conference Association at Holmes are all in this team’s portfolio.

The *Empowering Mission Team* responds to congregations and groups of congregations who are reaching out in mission to their communities and beyond. It is also responsible for mission interpretation, for keeping the powerful stories of mission at home and abroad before the congregations who make up the Presbytery. Currently, the presbytery’s Peace, Justice and Hunger Work Group, Cuba and El Salvador Work Groups, the Long Island Council of Churches, and the Long Island United Campus Ministries are all part of the ministry overseen by and supported through the Empowering Mission Team.

Because both teams work within the framework of our discernment of God's call to us as a community of faith, there are many instances of overlap. It is precisely because of this overlap that the teams must work closely together. At least once each year the teams meet together to strengthen the ties between them.

Core members of the *Partnering Congregations Team* and the *Empowering Mission Team* will be nominated by the Committee on Nominations and elected by the presbytery. In addition, each team will co-opt members as necessary to complete their work. Each team **also** sends representatives to serve on the *Shepherding Council*. Each team's budget will be developed by the team and refined through a budget consultation and development process overseen by the *Shepherding Council*.

Support and Facilitation Network

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the bulwark of truth. Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the Gentiles, believed throughout all the world, taken up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:14-16

In order for the work of both the *Partnering Congregations* and *Empowering Mission Teams* to truly reflect our discernment of God's call as we seek to exemplify our vision as the Presbytery of Long Island, it is necessary that an under-girding foundation and an over-arching structure, faithful to the Book of Order, be created to support and facilitate our ongoing and unfolding ministry and mission.

The Committees on Ministry, Nominations, Representation, and Preparation for Ministry, while continuing to function as constitutionally mandated, are part of the *Support and Facilitation Network*; their work provides resources and support for the *Partnering Congregations* and *Empowering Mission Teams*. The Committee on the Self-Development of People, the Board of Trustees, the Permanent Judicial Commission, and the Sexual Misconduct Units (Response Team and Investigating Pool) are also part of this network, providing leadership in matters concerning financial stewardship and legal resources, all vital to the continued well-being of the Presbytery.

Another part of the network is the Committee on Records, Rules, and Review. This core committee, working under the guidance of the Stated Clerk, has the authority to draw upon additional resources from persons within the Presbytery who have particular interests, abilities, and expertise in these matters, forming ad hoc teams to respond to particular needs. For instance, the review of session minutes would be accomplished by reading groups of clerks of session, charged under the authority of the Committee on Records, Rules, and Review.

The relationship of the Presbytery officers and staff to all the aspects of the ministry and mission of the Presbytery will be most evident through this network, whether advising the *Shepherding Council*, serving as a resource to either the *Partnering Congregations* or *Empowering Mission Teams*, or staffing a committee or work group of the *Support and Facilitation Network*.

Shepherding Council

Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:9-10

My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord God. Ezekiel 13:9

If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. 1 Timothy 4:6

The *Shepherding Council* is the Vision Keeper within the Presbytery, charged with the care and nurture of our discernment of God's call as it relates to our ongoing ministry, particularly to the efforts of the *Partnering Congregations Team* and the *Empowering Mission Team*. When necessary, the *Shepherding Council* will be facilitator, instigator, matchmaker, and resource, drawing assistance from all of the various aspects and entities of the Presbytery, including the *Support and Facilitation Network*. In this regard, the council may be understood as "shepherding" the discerned priorities so that all parts of the *Presbytery* structure are working toward those priorities. The council will also be a catalyst for strengthening all of the relationships and partnerships throughout the Presbytery.

The *Shepherding Council* will assess the work of the Presbytery, particularly as it relates to the vision and mission priorities, reporting its understandings to the Presbytery in preparation for the next *Visioning Retreat*. The Council will invite guests as necessary to each *Visioning Retreat*.

The *Shepherding Council* consists of six persons recommended at the *Visioning Retreat* and elected by the Presbytery to serve two year terms (in 2 classes of 3 persons), two persons sent from the *Empowering Mission Team*, two persons sent from the *Partnering Congregations Team*, five persons sent from the *Support and Facilitation Network*, one of the Synod Commissioners, the two Vice Moderators of Presbytery, the Moderator of Presbytery, the immediate past moderator of the Presbytery, and a representative from Long Island Presbyterian Women. The immediate past moderator of the Presbytery will serve as moderator of the *Shepherding Council*; the *Shepherding Council* may also name a Co-Moderator, if it chooses.

The *Shepherding Council*, through its Advance Planning Team, will be responsible for overall coordination for the stated Presbytery meetings, including securing locations, setting agendas and schedules, developing themes and workshops, and coordinating worship. Additional responsibilities will require the council to develop leadership within the Presbytery, oversee matters of personnel and staff, and direct and coordinate the annual budget process. The moderator of the Presbytery will serve on the Advance Planning Team; the first vice moderator on the Personnel Committee; the second vice moderator on the Budget and Finance Committee; and the immediate past moderator on the Nominating Team, which will recommend to the Presbytery's Committee on Nominations additional members for the above teams.

Presbytery Meetings and Visioning Retreat

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

As Christians, we know that we are called, both individually and corporately, to further the coming of God's Kingdom. How we understand that call and what we perceive our role to be in response forms the framework of our work each year as the Presbytery of Long Island. We allow ourselves to be open to both the leading and pursuit of the Holy Spirit, moving us perhaps to places we might not otherwise wish to go, as we seek to live out our vision. We will seek to discern the movement of God's Spirit in the church, and the needs of the people within our Presbytery and of our neighbors near and far.

The ***Visioning Retreat*** focuses our discernment for the coming years. Conceived as a time apart from the "business" of the ***Presbytery Meetings***, this retreat enables us to explore the many ways in which we are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, and our discernment of that call shapes our ministry, our vision, our goals, and our ***Presbytery Meetings*** for the coming years.

Our desire to be a presbytery that is flexible and responsive in ministry requires that we find ways to be open to seeing new opportunities. While we need to look at where our journey has thus far taken us, we also know that we can trust God for our unknown future. This is why we need a process for discernment. The ***Visioning Retreat*** is not a stated meeting of Presbytery, but rather a gathering where we come in humility to listen for God's voice. Equally important, however, the ***Visioning Retreat*** allows significant time for spiritual growth and exploration, both individually and corporately, through prayer, worship, study, and fellowship, all necessary elements in seeking any understanding of God's call.

It is paramount that there be no preconceived ideas as to what outcomes might be expected from our discernment. The discernment process itself is guided by a facilitator from inside or outside the Presbytery, who works with a team of persons charged by the ***Shepherding Council*** to design and plan the retreat. The only additional task mandated as part of the retreat is to discern and recommend to the Committee on Nominations names of persons to serve as the at-large members of the ***Shepherding Council***. Such recommendation is specifically intended to permit maximum participation from all aspects of the Presbytery's diversity, as well as allowing the entire process to be subject to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Mission Design Assessment Team
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